



# The Mini Page

Betty Debnam, Founding Editor and Editor at Large



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HOUSTON CHRONICLE

BETTY DEBNAM — Founding Editor and Editor at Large

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## A Symbol of the Season

# Hopping Into Spring

Do you keep any stuffed animals in your bedroom at home? You might have a fluffy stuffed bunny among your favorites.



Rabbits, both stuffed and alive, seem very cuddly with their soft fur, long ears and twitching noses. To celebrate the arrival of spring, The Mini Page takes a closer look at rabbits.

## Rabbit or hare?

You might think the words “rabbit” and “hare” describe the same animal. In fact, there are big differences between rabbits and hares.

- Rabbits are born without hair and are blind. Hares are born with fur and with their eyes open.

- Hares are usually bigger than rabbits and have longer legs and ears.

- Hares can usually run faster than rabbits.

- Some rabbits live in underground burrows, while hares have their nests above ground.



A hare in Alaska's Denali National Park.

photo by Kent Miller, courtesy National Park Service



photo by Jim Plesarowicz, courtesy National Park Service

The wild rabbit most often seen in the United States is the cottontail. These gray or brown rabbits sometimes have a white spot between their eyes and a white tail that looks like a cotton ball. This is a desert cottontail.

## Wild rabbits

Many thousands of years ago, rabbits could be found only on the continents of Africa and Europe. Today, they live on every continent except Antarctica.

North American rabbits usually like to live alone. They can mate at any time during the year, but February to October is their main mating season. Male rabbits, or **bucks**, will fight over a female rabbit, or **doe**.

A pregnant rabbit builds a nest for her babies. She may have four or five litters of babies during a year, with five to eight bunnies in each litter. But rabbits have many **predators**, or other animals that hunt them, so many of the babies will not live to be adults.

## What's for dinner?

Rabbits look for food at night. During the day, they hide in their nests and sleep.

Plants, including vegetables, grasses, clover and even tree bark, are their favorite foods.

Four sharp front teeth (two on the top, two on the bottom) help them bite through tough plant stems and leaves.

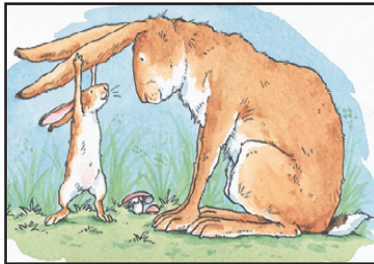
A wild rabbit eats quickly, then goes back to its safe nest. Next, it passes partly **digested**, or processed, food. It eats the soft droppings, which still have minerals important to the rabbit's health. Then it passes the food again, usually outside its nest. The rabbit will not eat these hard, dry droppings.



# Who's Your Bunny?

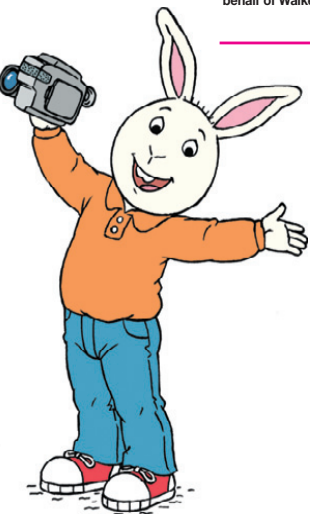
Rabbits have long been a symbol of spring. Some of our favorite characters from books, movies and television bring joy and laughter all year long. Can you identify these beloved bunnies or where they come from?

1. In this book, the little bunny tries to convince his dad of how much he loves him. The book is called:



“ \_\_\_\_\_ ”  
\_\_\_\_\_

Text © 1994 Sam McBratney. Illustrations © 1994 Anita Jeram. Reproduced by permission of Candlewick Press on behalf of Walker Books Ltd., London.



2. This goofy character from a favorite TV show is the star's best friend. They get into many adventures together. His name is:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. This poor nervous rabbit is also smart. He helps his friends in the Hundred-Acre Wood solve problems. He has a very simple name:

\_\_\_\_\_



4. This brother-and-sister team from books and TV take good care of each other. Sometimes brothers and sisters can be frustrating, but these two always find ways to work things out. Their names are:

\_\_\_\_\_



© Disney Enterprises, Inc. Based on the "Winnie the Pooh" works by A.A. Milne and E.H. Sheppard.

5. This bunny from a series of books by Beatrix Potter has been a much-loved character for more than 100 years. Beatrix's best-known book has been translated into 16 languages. This naughty bunny's name is:



art © Frederick Warne & Co., 1902, 2002

6. This clever rabbit was written about by Joel Chandler Harris in the late 1800s. Harris collected African-American stories and wrote several books that included this character, whose name is:



art © Frederick Warne & Co., 1902, 2002

Answers: 1. "Guess How Much I Love You"; 2. Buster Baxter from "Arthur"; 3. Rabbit from "Winnie the Pooh"; 4. Max and Ruby; 5. Peter Rabbit; 6. Brer Rabbit

\_\_\_\_\_

## Mini Spy ...



Mini Spy and her friends are hunting for Easter eggs. See if you can find:



- puppy
- bell
- beaver
- rabbit
- sock
- alligator
- letter n
- number 3
- word MINI (twice)



TM Basset Brown The News Hound's

## Rabbits

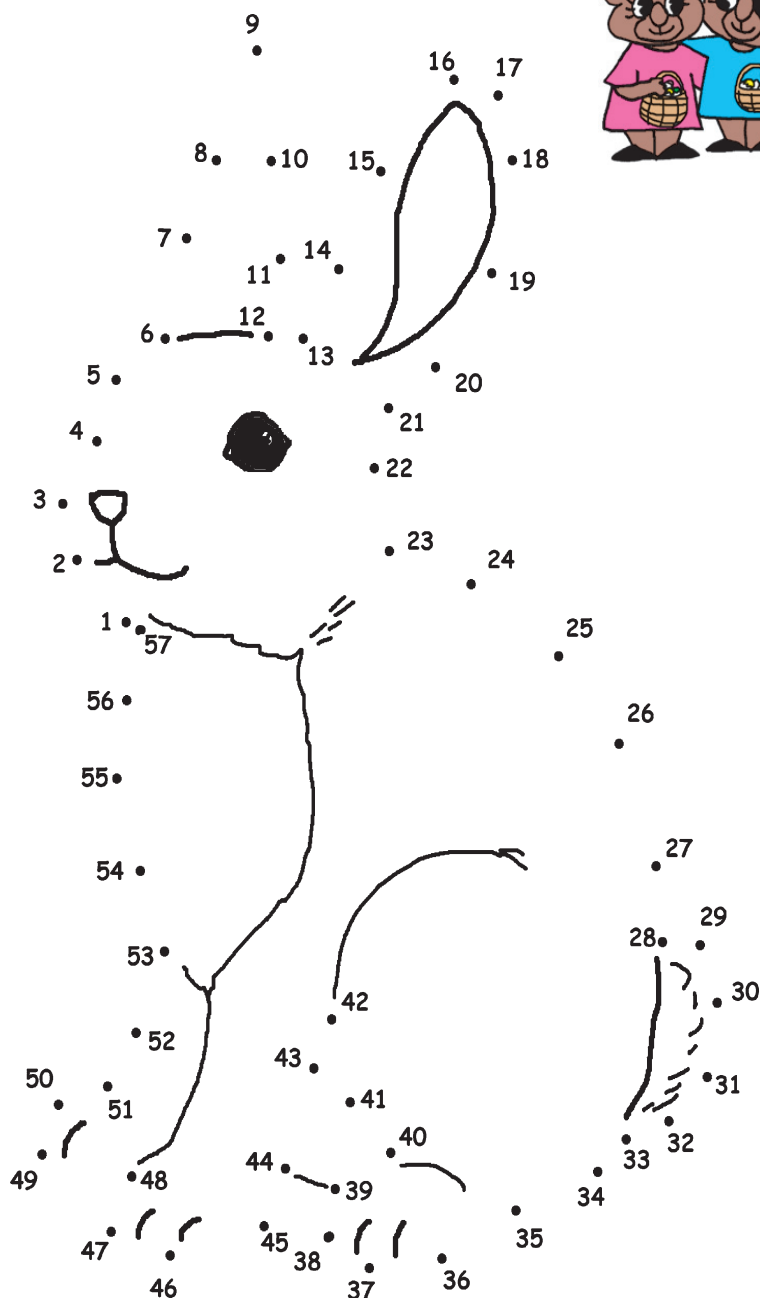
TRY 'N FIND

Words that remind us of rabbits are hidden in the block below. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find: HOP, SPRING, RABBIT, HARE, EAR, FAST, BUCK, BURROW, DOE, PREDATOR, TEETH, COTTONTAIL, BUNNY, PETER, BRER, PET, CAGE, PELLET, MOON, VEGETABLE, CUTE, LUCK, PLAY, LITTER.



T S P R I N G R O T A D E R P  
I K A B Q L J W H K C U L E E  
B E X N B Y I T G A J V T C L  
B U C K W U E T Y K R E W Q L  
A Z A V Y E N A T H R E O C E  
R P G X T B L N D E E L R U T  
C Q E S J P O G Y D R V R T X  
L I A T N O T T O C B F U E H  
Z F V J M H V E G E T A B L E

Go dot to dot and color.



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## Rookie Cookie's Recipe Pizza Calzones

### You'll need:

- 1 (13.8-ounce) can refrigerated pizza crust dough
- 6 tablespoons spaghetti sauce (or pizza sauce)
- 16 turkey pepperoni slices
- 1 (2.25-ounce) can sliced black olives
- 1 (7-ounce) can mushroom stems and pieces
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 slightly beaten egg
- cooking spray

### What to do:

1. Coat a cookie sheet with cooking spray.
2. Roll out pizza crust dough and cut in half.
3. Spread 3 tablespoons spaghetti sauce on each half.
4. Add pepperoni, olives and mushrooms.
5. Top with 1/2 cup cheese on each half.
6. Fold each calzone in half, making a pocket. Pinch the edges tightly closed.
7. Brush outsides of calzones with the beaten egg.
8. Bake at 425 degrees for 20 minutes (or follow directions on pizza crust can) until golden brown. Makes 2 large servings.

*You will need an adult's help with this recipe.*



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## Meet Snicket and Stookey



photo by Jack Hayn

**Daniel Handler (Lemony Snicket) and Nathaniel Stookey**

Daniel Handler, better known as Lemony Snicket, has teamed up with composer Nathaniel Stookey and the San Francisco Symphony to write "The Composer Is Dead."

The San Francisco Symphony **commissioned**, or paid for the writing, of the new symphony. It wanted a symphony to teach kids about the instruments of the orchestra.

Nathaniel Stookey wrote the music and Lemony Snicket wrote the story. In performances, in the book and on the CD, Snicket also **narrates**, or tells, the story of this funny murder mystery.

Lemony Snicket is best known for his group of kids' books, "A Series of Unfortunate Events." Nathaniel Stookey has composed music for several symphonies. When he was 17, he became the youngest composer to be commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony's New and Unusual Music Series.

Daniel and Nathaniel have been friends since high school.

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## The Mini Page® Standards Spotlight: Hopping Into Spring

Mini Page activities meet many state and national educational standards. Each week we identify standards that relate to The Mini Page's content and offer activities that will help your students reach them.

### This week's standards:

- Students understand the characteristics and life cycles of organisms. (Science: Life Science)
- Students comprehend and respond to a variety of images and text. Students identify forms and elements of literature. (Language Arts: Reading)
- Students describe the way artistic creations serve as expressions of culture. (Social Studies: Culture)

### Activities:

1. Design a toy rabbit to give to a friend. Draw your rabbit. Write several sentences that tell about your toy rabbit. Share your picture with family members and friends.
2. With a friend, go through the newspaper and circle all the pictures of rabbits in news stories and ads. How many rabbits are in the newspaper? How many look like cartoon rabbits and how many look like real rabbits?
3. Draw a line down the center of a piece of paper. Write the word "Smaller" in the first column and "Larger" in the second column. Now find newspaper words or pictures of different animals. Paste the words/pictures of animals that are smaller than rabbits in the first column and words/pictures of animals that are larger than rabbits in the second column.
4. Look in the "pets" or "animals for sale" section of the classified ads in the newspaper. Find examples of animals other than rabbits that are small and furry. How many different animals did you find? Which animal would you like to have for a pet?
5. Use resource books and the Internet to find rabbits that appear in cartoons/movies and in books. Make a list of the characters and books you find. Now survey at least five friends or family members. Ask them to name the cartoon or movie rabbits they remember. Ask them to name any rabbits they remember from books. Put checks by the names on your list. How many names on your list were mentioned by the people you interviewed? Which names were remembered by the most people?

(standards by Dr. Sherrye D. Garrett, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi)

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MIGHTY  
FUNNY'S

## Mini Jokes

All the following jokes have something in common.  
Can you guess the common theme or category?

**Raymond:** What do you call a group of flying rabbits?

**Phil:** The hare force!

**Anastasia:** What do you get if you cross a hippopotamus with a bunny?

**Wayne:** A hopopotamus!



**Terry:** How do rabbits fix their hair?  
**John:** With hare brushes!

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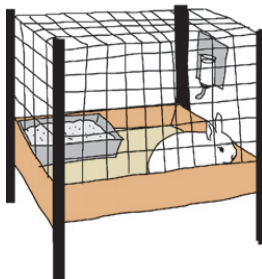
# Rabbits at Home

Rabbits may seem cute and cuddly, but just like any other pet, each has its own personality. Some rabbits play more than others; some are easily startled and might run away or bite when they're scared.

Having a rabbit as a pet requires a **commitment**, or promise, to take care of the animal and spend time with it. The Mini Page found out more about caring for a pet rabbit at home.

## Housing

Some people like to keep rabbits outdoors in a rabbit **hutch**, or cage. However, experts suggest that pet rabbits be kept indoors to keep them safe from other animals and bad weather.



Indoor rabbits need a cage with a litter box. They can be trained to use the litter box just like a cat.

Some rabbit owners add rugs and toys to the cage to make it more cozy.

## On the run

Rabbits should be let out of the cage to play, but experts say they should be supervised while they're out. They like to play early in the morning and in the late afternoon.



photo courtesy House Rabbit Society

If your rabbit plays outdoors, you should stay with it and have a pen so it can't run away.



This pet rabbit is enjoying some fresh parsley. Rabbits can eat a wide variety of vegetables.

photo courtesy House Rabbit Society

## Feed me!

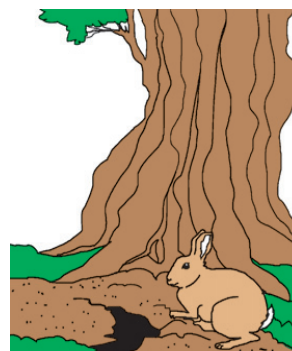
Unlike rabbits in the wild, pet rabbits eat **pellets**. These small, dry pieces of food contain a mixture of alfalfa, vitamins and other healthy ingredients for rabbits. Your pet should also have fresh hay, vegetables and water.

## Looking for something to do

Rabbits are quiet, clean animals. But just like other favorite pets, they can cause trouble.

Some rabbits chew on things they shouldn't, such as carpet, electrical cords or **baseboards**, where the wall meets the floor.

Rabbits also like to **burrow**, or dig. Owners sometimes provide a "tunnel" made out of a box with carpet in it for the bunny to burrow into.



## Rabbit legends

We usually think of rabbits in the spring. For instance, a bunny is one symbol of Easter.

But there are other legends about rabbits that go back thousands of years.

- According to a Chinese myth, the "man in the moon" was thought to be a rabbit.
- North American Indians told stories of White Rabbit, who was an inventor. He was also a trickster.



- Many people believe carrying a rabbit's foot is lucky. Some versions of this legend say the rabbit's foot is lucky only if you give it away.

- If you say "white rabbit" on the first day of each month or the first day of a new moon, you'll have good luck.

- A rabbit running through your garden means you'll have a healthy crop this year.



White Rabbit!

JANUARY

The Mini Page thanks the House Rabbit Society for help with this issue.

Next week, The Mini Page celebrates Library Week.

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